

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the sixteenth day of May 2022 A.D. the said meeting was called to order by Town Council President Stephen Moffitt, Jr. at 7:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Stephen Moffitt, Jr., Sharon Davis, Scott Bill Hirst, Robert Marvel, Michael Geary; Town Solicitor Stephen Sypole; Town Manager Brian Rosso; Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

Councilors Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Marvel, and Geary announced they were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one from the public wished to speak.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Councilor Moffitt reported information on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP): high speed internet affordability program for ACP-eligible families is posted on the Town's website.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ORDER

There was no vote taken and no concerns voiced over the agenda order.

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilor Hirst removed the Town Council Meeting Minutes of May 2, 2022 as he was not in attendance and would abstain from voting.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS FOLLOWS: Approve the May 3, 2022 Financial Town Assembly Minutes; Set June 6, 2022 as a hearing date for a Multi-Event Permit for three musical events for their seasonal campers filed by Holly Tree Campground; Accept the following

monthly financial/activity report: Town Clerk; Approve refund resulting from a taxpayer overpayment on 2021 real property tax roll submitted by the Tax Collector.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO APPROVE THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 2, 2022.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel

ABSTAIN: Hirst

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

PUBLIC HEARING:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO SIT AS A LICENSING BOARD.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT

The Council opened a hearing on an application for a Special Event Permit filed by Steven Minick on behalf of the Ashaway Sportsman Club for the annual Huck Finn Day co-sponsored by the Recreation Department scheduled for Sunday, June 5, 2022 from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM (rain date: Sunday, June 12, 2022) to be held at Crandall Field, 188 Main Street, Ashaway, RI 02804.

Mr. and Mrs. Minick were present and Clerk Cook-Martin noted that the applicant had requested a waiver of the application fee.

Councilor Hirst believed that this event was very important to the youth of Ashaway. Mr. Minick, a longtime resident of Ashaway, explained that Huck Finn Day was an event that has been held for approximately seventy-four years. This

is a free event for anyone to attend and is a fun day for the kids; they hope to stock the pond so the kids can fish and receive prizes.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR MARVEL AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR HIRST TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT FOR HUCK FINN DAY.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO ADJOURN AS LICENSING BOARD AND RECONVENE AS COUNCIL.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

NEW BUSINESS

SCHEDULE WORKSHOPS RE: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS

This matter was scheduled for discussion regarding scheduling workshops for the spending of the American Rescue Plan Act funds received by the town.

Councilor Geary asked if there could be any discussion on this matter and Solicitor Sypole noted that it could only be discussion on setting a workshop schedule. Councilor Geary noted that there was a situation in town which by the end of the week was going to put the town's people at a safety risk. Solicitor Sypole suggested they look to their Bylaws regarding emergency matters being added to the agenda. It was decided that they would schedule an emergency meeting for Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 6:00 pm. Regarding workshops, Mr. Rosso suggested they hold two workshops. He noted that he has spoken with department heads in detail and put together a proposed list of projects. He suggested that he has gone through and evaluated proposed projects; done as much of the leg work as he could as far as obtaining cost estimates; and has tried

to prioritize that list for the Council to review. At the second workshop he felt they could bring in nonprofits and ask them to speak towards their requests.

The Council scheduled workshops for Monday, May 23, 2022 at 6:30 pm and Tuesday, May 31, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

HB 7180 AND COMPANION SB 2311 RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES – SOCIAL AND HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS RATE REVIEW AND RATE SETTING PROCESS ACT OF 2022

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to support HB 7180 and companion bill SB 2311 Relating to Human Services – Social and Human Services Programs Rate Review and Rate Setting Process Act of 2022.

Councilor Davis noted that the Department of Human Services was going to be reviewing its rates; however, it was the schedule that had caught her attention. In August of this year the Governor is going to appoint a committee to look at these rates; however, the rates will not become effective until July of 2024. She felt the Council should support these bills and believed that the ambulance associations would fall under these categories.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO SUPPORT HB 7180 AND COMPANION BILL SB 2311 RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES – SOCIAL AND HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS RATE REVIEW AND RATE SETTING PROCESS ACT OF 2022.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES WATER BILL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This matter was before the Town Council to discuss, consider and possibly vote to participate in the RI Department of Health Services Water Bill Assistance Program and authorize the Town Manager to sign the 2022-2023 RI Low-Income Home Water Assistance (LIHWAP) Program Agreement.

Mr. Rosso noted that this was something done completely by the RI Department of Health Services so the application would be approved and submitted to the state agency. The town is just a conduit which provides information to our residents; there are 52 people on the water line and they would be able to apply for some assistance.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR MARVEL AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR GEARY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES WATER BILL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel, Hirst

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT RE: ELECTRIC CHARGING STATIONS

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and vote on a motion to either approve or reject a proposed text amendment to the Town’s Zoning Ordinance District Use Table to allow electric charging stations in commercial, manufacturing and neighborhood business zones including the two current gas stations following completion and closing of the public hearing on May 2, 2022.

Councilor Hirst suggested that he would be voting for this proposed text amendment and he was disappointed in the Council for prohibiting future gas stations in town. Council President Moffitt advised that he would not be voting to approve this for he felt that this would not help anybody but would only be more restrictive, for if someone wanted to put an electric charging station in their home right now they could and if a business or an employer wished to add electric charging stations to their facility they could. He noted there was a study done in December which has a lot of information and he felt this issue may be revisited in the future. Councilor Davis wished to add to the record that in December of 2021 the Office of Energy Resources published “Electrifying Transportation, A Strategic Policy Guide for Improving Public Access to Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in Rhode Island”. She read a portion of the guide which stated that

the priority for 2022 was to reinvest in and refine incentive programs for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure; the agency action was going to be the Office of Energy Resources in coordination with DOT and DEM and with public participation, will develop an investment strategy for federal funding in line with this guide. RIPTA is to develop a road map to fully electrify their fleet. DOT will conduct a study and make recommendations regarding transportation revenue impacts because most of maintaining the road comes from the gas tax. Councilor Marvel agreed that this was not something that had to be dealt with right away but his concern was that if the State decides to start giving incentives to developers, we might be in the same situation as with solar. Solicitor Sypole noted that if they put something in the ordinance to say that it is a permitted use, they do not know what that would look like in the future and they could open the door to who knows what as technology develops. He felt a cautious approach would be best. Councilor Davis asked what the process would be for someone wanting to install a charging station. Solicitor Sypole felt that they would be only installing a piece of equipment and would only need to obtain an electrical permit.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR GEARY TO REJECT A PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE TOWN'S ZONING ORDINANCE DISTRICT USE TABLE TO ALLOW ELECTRIC CHARGING STATIONS IN COMMERCIAL, MANUFACTURING AND NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS ZONES INCLUDING THE TWO CURRENT GAS STATIONS.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel, Hirst

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

PROPOSED LEGISLATION HB 8220

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to oppose proposed legislation HB 8220 Relating to Taxation- Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes.

Tiana Zartman, Tax Assessor was present. She noted that House Bill 8220 was scheduled for consideration last Thursday, May 12th, and the Committee recommended the measure be held for further study. Mrs. Zartman noted that the previous bill was held and then there was a substitute added to it making it non-retroactive and then this new bill was proposed on May 6, 2022. The new bill is essentially the same as the other bill being that land cannot be reclassified or revalued, except for farmland. The only difference is that this bill is not retroactive and it would take effect for all parcels as of December 31, 2022; therefore, nothing previous to that date would have to be refunded. Mrs. Zartman advised that currently the up-and-running solar arrays are taxed at \$45,000 per acre, residential property is taxed at \$3,000 per acre and forestry is taxed at \$115.00 per acre. Some of the solar arrays are still under construction but she increased the value in order for the Council to get a more complete picture of our potential loss. Based on the projects in town it would be an \$11 Million Dollar assessed value loss each year and using this year's proposed tax rate it would equate to \$200,000 in taxes annually. Over the years this would equate to a huge loss for the town.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO SUPPORT THE SENDING OF A RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO HB 6676.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel, Hirst

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

RE-ADOPT UPDATED & REVISED FY 2022/2023 BUDGET

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to re-adopt an updated and revised FY 2022/2023 budget to include the Chariho School District's most recent budget figures.

Mr. Rosso noted that the Council previously approved the operating budget for FY 2022/2023; however, thereafter they received word from Chariho that they were going to level fund their budget. In revising the town's budget to include the

final school's figures, he noted there would be no tax increase at all. The tax levy would remain the same at \$18.53 for tax year 2023. Councilor Hirst once again advised that he wished the Chariho School Committee was open minded enough to have an outside management study performed. He also noted that Hopkinton was entitled to have four active members on the School Committee and he believed that one of those members had only made it to two meetings this year. He expected all members to attend these meetings. Councilor Geary agreed with Councilor Hirst's statement.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO READOPT AN UPDATED AND REVISED FY 2022/2023 BUDGET TO INCLUDE THE CHARIHO SCHOOL DISTRICT'S MOST RECENT BUDGET FIGURES.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel, Hirst

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO HOLD AN EMERGENCY MEETING ON MAY 18, 2022 AT 6:00 PM.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel, Hirst

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke during the second Public Comment.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR GEARY TO ADJOURN IN MEMORY OF BRIAN STANLEY.

SO VOTED

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk

Marita D. Murray

Deputy Town Clerk